

VZCZCXRO3403

PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV

DE RUEHSF #1393 2711426

ZNY SSSSS ZZH

P 281426Z SEP 06

FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA

TO RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI PRIORITY 0226

RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2638

INFO RUEHZN/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

S E C R E T SOFIA 001393

SIPDIS

NOFORN

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR ISN/CATR, EUR/NCE, EUR/PRA, PM/WRA, L/PM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/28/2016

TAGS: PREL PARM MASS ETTC GG BU

SUBJECT: BULGARIA CONSULTS ON ARMS TRANSFERS TO GEORGIA

Classified By: DCM Alex Karagiannis, for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶11. (U) This is an action request -- please see paragraph 5.

¶12. (S) On September 26, Christo Atanasov and Ivelina Bachevanova of the Ministry of Economy's Export Control Department informed us of a high-value export application for sale of Bulgarian weapons and ammunition to the Republic of Georgia. According to the MOE, the listed end-user is the Georgian Ministry of Interior, and the order itself includes large quantities of a wide variety of ammunition, ranging from 9mm rounds to 81mm mortar shells. The order also includes night vision equipment, training kits, and small quantities of assault rifles and revolver-style "Avalanche" grenade launchers. Atanasov and Bachevanova claimed that the order does not include thermobaric rounds or other sensitive weapons technologies. NOTE: Though MOE representatives did not state which Bulgarian company filed the application, the product list strongly indicates that the materiel will be supplied by Kazanlak-based manufacturer "Arsenal" (www.arsenal-bg.com). END NOTE.

¶13. (S/NF) According to Atanasov, "different sources" (not further identified) have suggested that the U.S. is aware of this proposed sale, and supports it as consistent with Georgia's legitimate defense needs. He requested confirmation of the U.S. position on this sale in order to better inform the GOB's deliberations on consideration of the export application.

¶14. (S/NF) Atanasov went on to say that arms transfers to Georgia are a constant bone of contention in Bulgaria's bilateral relationship with Russia. He indicated that Russia has long raised the issue bilaterally, but has recently begun escalating pressure, raising the issue in "every possible forum," including Wassenaar. He complained of Russian attempts to embarrass Bulgaria in multilateral fora by combining the issue of Georgian sales with the Russian-Bulgarian dispute over licensing for Soviet-designed military equipment and allegations of poor control over Georgian weapons stockpiles. In addition, Atanasov claimed to have information that Russia has been approaching EU member states bilaterally in an attempt to increase pressure on Bulgaria and other Eastern European countries to halt arms sales to Georgia.

¶15. (S/NF) ACTION REQUEST: Post requests Department's position regarding the sale of Bulgarian small arms/light weapons and associated equipment/ammunition to the Georgian Ministry of Interior. Point of contact is Political Officer John Senior (SeniorJM@state.sgov.gov).

BEYRLE